



Good Morning. Thank you for inviting me to discuss the Child and Family Services Budget.

My name is Kristie Oliver. I am the Executive Director of the Coalition for Family and Children's Services in Iowa. The Coalition's alliance of agencies provides most of the direct treatment child welfare services to abused and troubled children in Iowa. For 31 years, the Coalition has supported efforts to build better futures for vulnerable children in Iowa. Central to this belief is the public systems should promote programs and policies that sustain lifelong family connections for children and youth.

The Coalition for Family and Children's Services believes that the State of Iowa should provide a comprehensive array of prevention, intervention and treatment services and supports to improve child **safety** and **permanency**, and to promote child and family **well-being** in instances where children have been or are at risk.

The federal government holds the State of Iowa accountable for achieving **safety, permanency** and **well-being** outcomes. It does so through the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). The review examines Iowa's performance in helping children to grow up safely, in permanent homes, and in communities that are focused on their well-being. In other words, the review evaluates whether the State of Iowa is actually improving outcomes for the children and families whom they serve through child and family services programs.

In the fall of 2010, the federal government conducted the second Round CFSR Review for the State of Iowa. During the onsite review 65 cases were reviewed, there were state and local level stakeholder interviews and a statewide assessment was utilized to identify best practices and to determine performance on systemic factors.

During the Child and Family Services Review two Permanency Outcomes were viewed.

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Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

During the preliminary findings the federal government labeled Iowa's use of shelter placements as a permanency concern. The Iowa Department of Human Services is addressing this concern in the Iowa Department of Human Services request for Proposal (RFP) Child Welfare Emergency Services (ACFS-11-114). As stated in the proposal, it is evident that Iowa must work toward a reasonable balance between funded bed capacity and other child welfare emergency services alternatives so that Children may be served in or near their home or community without having to rely on congregate settings as the only available option.

However, the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) and their private agency partners providing services also recognize that an appropriate emergency shelter bed capacity is an important component of a child welfare emergency services continuum. For some Children there is no feasible alternative.

Background: Child welfare emergency services, including, emergency shelter care, are options to provide kids a "safe Harbor" when the health or safety of a child is compromised and cannot be guaranteed in their home environment. Typically, these children are abused, neglected, homeless, abandoned or runaways, referred by law enforcement, DHS and the Courts.

Child Welfare Emergency Services provide the "safe Harbor" for a youth until appropriate and desired placement is available. Child Welfare Emergency Services must meet the needs of these youth with serious mental, emotional and/or behavioral problems. Such youth require intensive and comprehensive programming to help them achieve and maintain some acceptable level of emotional stability and behavioral control. Child Welfare Emergency Services must meet these youth's needs in a temporary setting with limited resources.

We urge you not to take this "safe Harbor" away from the youth. The State of Iowa has worked very hard to develop a system which provides vital services to the most vulnerable children in the State. The reduction for child welfare emergency services in the House Omnibus bill could cause immeasurable

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harm to innocent dependent children. The negative impacts on individual children, communities, and the economy if cuts are adopted would simply be too great.

From both a human and economic perspective, we urge you to reject the proposed cuts to the “safe Harbor” in the children and family services network.

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